

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5648

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, MARR, LE, SY, PLO, IS
SUBJECT: ISRAELI VIEWS ON LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

REFS: A) BEIRUT 3677; B) BEIRUT 3693; C) DAMASCUS 4643

1. DURING A MEETING AT THE MFA AUGUST 1, DCM BRIEFED MOSHE RAVIV (NORTH AMERICAN SECTION CHIEF) AND DAVID PELED (INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH) ON DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON ON THE BASIS OF THE HELPFUL MESSAGES IN REFERENCE. PELED SAID THE INFORMATION IN THESE MESSAGES WAS IN LINE WITH INFORMATION THEY WERE RECEIVING FROM THEIR OWN SOURCES.

2. ASKED SPECIFICALLY HOW ISRAEL REGARDED THE PALESTINIAN INITIATIVE, NEITHER AT FIRST SEEMED TO WANT TO GIVE A DIRECT REPLY, BUT THEIR ATTITUDE IMPLIED THE QUESTION: CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME FROM THE PLO? EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, THEY ALLOWED AS HOW ISRAEL COULD APPROVE OF THE INITIATIVE, WITH SEVERAL HEDGES. FOR ONE THING, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PALESTINIANS MUST LEAVE THE BORDER AREA. FOR ANOTHER, ANY FORCES ON THE OTHER SIDE MUST BE TRUE LEBANESE, NOT SYRIANS OR PALESTINIANS DISGUISED AS LEBANESE. SUPPOSE, THE DCM INQUIRED, ALL THESE CONDITIONS WERE FULFILLED, AND SUPPOSE ALSO THAT A SOVEREIGN LEBANESE AUTHORITY MOVED TO CLOSE THE "GOOD FENCE," WHAT THEN? BOTH RAVIV AND PELED CONFESSED

THAT, UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY WERE NOT SURE WHAT THEIR GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE WOULD BE BECAUSE THE GOOD FENCE HAS ACHIEVED A MEASURE OF IMPORTANCE OF ITS OWN, AT LEAST IN ISRAELI EYES.

3. COMMENT: THIS CONVERSATION SEEMS TO MIRROR THE GENERAL ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARD RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH LEBANON. INTENSE SUSPICION OF THE MOTIVES OF THE PALESTINIAN PROGENITORS OF THE INITIATIVE AND OF THE SYRIANS, CONCERN THAT THEIR CHRISTIAN LEBANESE FRIENDS MIGHT BE TRICKED OR LURED INTO ABANDONING THEIR STRONGHOLDS ALONG THE BORDER AND THEN NEUTRALIZED, FEAR FOR THE OPENINGS IN THE GOOD FENCE WHICH HAVE BEEN USED FOR PROPAGANDA AS WELL AS HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES - ALL THESE NEGATIVE ASPECTS MINGLE WITH A GLIMMER OF HOPE THAT IT JUST MIGHT BE POSSIBLE (FOR REASONS NOT CLEAR TO THEM) TO REMOVE THE TERRORIST THREAT FROM THEIR NORTHERN BORDER AND BEGIN THE PROCESS OF GETTING THE SYRIANS OUT OF SOUTH LEBANON. RATHER UNCHARACTERISTICALLY, THE MEDIA HAS BEEN RELATIVELY MUTED IN RECENT DAYS IN REGARD TO LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS, LIMITING ITSELF MAINLY TO STRAIGHT REPORTING. THE MEDIA, ALONG WITH RAVIV AND PELED, SEEMS TO SHARE AMBASSADOR PARKER'S VIEW THAT "IT ALL SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE."
LEWIS

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